

danse
macabre
charlotte
malcolm
smith

Mit ausgewählten Texten von
Eda Sancakdar Onikinci
Ee Leen Lee
Franziska Leuthäuser
Evelyn Araluen
Mary Therese Kurkalang
Kyla Pasha

/

Contents/ Inhalt

Through the Door Backwards Charlotte Malcolm-Smith	8
Dancing with Death: Resurrection, Sensuality, and the Palpable Presence of Death Eda Sancakdar Onikinci	11
List of Works / page 18–33 Charlotte Malcolm-Smith	17
No Sleep Every Night Ee Leen Lee	35
Charlotte Malcolm-Smith and Franziska Leuthäuser Spoke in the Artist's Studio on a Sunny May Morning in 2022	45
The Last Endeavour Evelyn Araluen	54
What Do We Know of Death But What We Imagine It To Be, Our Experience of Death Is And Can Always Be, From A Living Perspective ... Mary Therese Kurkalang	59
List of Works / page 65–65 Charlotte Malcolm-Smith	65
The Lullaby for Grieving Kyla Pasha	83
Sketchbooks/Skizzenbücher	86

...

Rückwärts durch die Tür	92
Charlotte Malcolm-Smith	
Der Tanz mit dem Tod: Auferstehung, Sinnlichkeit und die greifbare Gegenwart des Todes	
Eda Sancakdar Onikinci	94
Kein Schlaf jede Nacht	100
Ee Leen Lee	
Gespräch zwischen Charlotte Malcolm-Smith und Franziska Leuthäuser an einem sonnigen Maimorgen im Jahr 2022 im Atelier der Künstlerin	106
Das letzte Wagnis	114
Evelyn Araluen	
Was wir über den Tod wissen, wie wir ihn uns jedoch vorstellen, unsere Erfahrungen des Todes und was er stets sein kann, aus der Perspektive einer Lebenden ...	118
Mary Therese Kurkalang	
Der Trauer Wiegenlied	122
Kyla Pasha	
Acknowledgements	126

Through the Door Backwards

Charlotte
Malcolm-Smith

Sometimes my father would howl in his sleep and when, as children, we asked him what the matter was, he told us that he was being attacked by ghosts. We never questioned this explanation because, growing up in Scotland, ghosts were as real for us as clouds in the sky. Today I no longer believe in ghosts but at night the remains of something lurk under my bed.

Later, as an art student in London, I used to slip into the Victoria and Albert Museum. Half-way up one of the staircases was a glass case full of Memento Mori from the Victorian age, where I would always linger. Dead hair bracelets and skulls formed from pins. A safe place where my fascination with death was reciprocated.

Nowadays, I live in Frankfurt, Germany but in 2019 I returned to London for a year to research the Victorian's relationship to death, which resulted in the series of paintings on which this book is based. The images are accompanied by six texts based on the *Danse Macabre* which I commissioned or found from authors across the globe to explore the universal relevance of this subject matter.

Writers, poets and a painter reached out across continents to join in the dance of death.

Charlotte Malcolm-Smith, 2022



Der Pabst gewalt den Tod nicht halt.



Das Haupt der Welt dem Tod heim fält.



Das Haupt getronnt der Tod nicht schont.



Den Cardinal ich auch hin hol.



Kindt Narren Nüchlich ge hören in mein rich.



Schwer, Bischoff, fähr ich auß n' freyhoff.



Kriegsmann, Bekker gleich halten her.



Schar, Herr oder fährst dem Todt den wisch.



Der Dürer auch mag untres Todes fühl.



Den jungen Graf er in d' Grab bracht.



Der Dürer auch mag untres Todes fühl.



Kein Mensch, wie hat ein stündens Stalt.



Arm Ede Stücken Todt behüt.



Den jungen Graf er in d' Grab bracht.

Dancing with Death: Resurrection, Sensuality, and the Palpable Presence of Death

Eda Sancakdar
Onikinci

Left: Figure 1: A detail from an 18th century oil painting
depiction of the *Dance of death*.

Danse Macabre, or the Dance of Death is an allegorical concept which dates back to medieval times. The allegory is often visualized as figures holding hands in a frantic circular dance where the unliving escort the living.

The dead are often pictured as dancing, laughing skeletons, implying that the living should enjoy their remaining time in life as everyone will eventually taste the sorrows of death. They were also to remind the living that death does not respect social status, gender or age; it can strike anyone, anytime, anywhere. The representation of the living in Danse Macabre vary. While in the oldest known versions we see only men, in other accounts the men and women are depicted together as they face the final judgement. In some other versions, the image even reflects the details of economic injustices as the rich sees the death as a loss of status and wealth, while the poor welcomes it as a relief from earthly sorrows.

Danse Macabre is indeed a quite intriguing scene. It reflects on how people may have approached the idea of death during the Middle Ages; a period in history when death was not only a natural occurrence but a central preoccupation. This is quite understandable considering how daily life must have been affected by the events such as the epidemic of the Black Death or the devastation of the Hundred Year's War (1337–1453). What interests me the most in the allegory of Danse Macabre, however, is something else.

Danse Macabre is a stern reminder of the impedance of death and a calling to remorse, but it also shows a line of communication between the unliving and the living that is quite curious in its manifestation: a frantic dance, a nervous gesture, a hysterical laughter. This sensual performance appears to be the opposite of what comes to mind when one imagines a period of global mourning. For it lacks a certain ethereality or tragedy that might reflect the emotional exhaustion of the people who experience the catastrophe of untimely deaths on a daily basis. Yet history reminds



Figure 2: From Hans Holbeins *Dance of Death (The Noble Lady)*, 16th century.

us that in times of worldwide grief or collective questioning of the meaning of life and death, people's reaction can be quite unexpected. For periods of similar episodes have more than often witnessed a unique sensuality that presents itself as a haptically charged and physically present set of performances. Indeed, as 500 years after the Black Death, when a new plague ravaged the globe killing some 12 million people, the crowds were once again captivated by a sensual performance, that is, the Spiritualist séance.

Spiritualism was a 19th century metaphysical system subscribed by tens of millions of people around the world. It supported the belief in the life after death and the main occupation of its believers was to seek alternative ways to communicate with the dead. The central practice of Spiritualism was thus the séance, by which the followers pursued answers to their questions about death and the realm of the unliving.

During a séance Spiritualists would employ different "mediums" to contact with the spirits. Their preferred media to communicate with the dead were often chosen from amongst the emerging 19th century scientific advances and technology, such as electricity, photography and telegraphy. Utilising "modern" technologies to contact the otherwise invisible spirits was also a way to justify their methods, suggesting that they presented the facts in all their positivity and uniqueness. However, more important for their communication with the dead was always another "*medium*".

In a structural framework, Spiritualists' main line of communication was the people called mediums, who negotiated their bodies between the living and the dead. 19th century Spiritualists expected mediums to have a certain "feminine sensitivity" which allegedly made them bodily perceptive of the dead and their messages from other realms. Therefore, most often they were to be women, or "feminine" men, who would present various sensual and overly corporeal performances as they communicated with



Figure 3: The Death and the Lady.



Figure 4: Séance

the dead. In fact, the 19th century scientists considered “corporeal sympathy” also a “feminine trait”, something which provided Mediums with the ability that could govern the interaction of mind with mind, body with body, and each with the other (Cox, 2003). These qualities of the Spiritualist mediums reframed their body as a *media* for the visual, auditory, and haptic sensations of spirits. And more broadly, it equipped them with ways of dealing with the disturbing forces of the past trauma becoming present to bodies *as spirits*.

Considering such role of the medium, Spiritualist performances hold an interesting resemblance to the allegory of Danse Macabre. For in both scenes the dead resurrects to take part in a circular, collective performance. In a spiritualist séance, the dead forces the medium into performing a hysteric dance as she laughs uncontrollably, jolts and cramps to maintain a controlled proximity with the living and the dead. So is the case in the allegory of Danse Macabre, where the living people are in a trance-like state holding hands with the dead who hysterically laugh and jolt, leading the dance in a circular movement.

From this perspective, we can consider both a performative act of healing or a way of dealing with the feelings and sensations that occurs in times of collective grief and trauma. In that sense, resurrected bodies, hysterical skeletons or the bodies of the mediums who host the dead are not merely fun spectacle but leaders of a collective experience which helped people deal with the social effects of mourning. Indeed, as Robert Cox, a Canadian scholar of political science, puts it, the medium's body in Spiritualism is anticipated as something that is haptically connected to other bodies, both material and etheric, generating a cosmic sensation and "chains of sympathy" which in turn establishes "a universe of the body and a body of the universe," and "a true social physiology" (Cox, 2003, p. 90).

I believe both examples show how the times of collective mediation of death and mourning have often been grounded in a haptic performance, a sensory overload. That is, through a body adjusted as a medium or an instrument people who are in grief can actualise their physical senses and readjust themselves to their bodies' sensorium. Such adjustment may also be seen as a symbolic antidote to the overwhelming expectancies of socially "appropriate" or accepted ways of mourning and fear of death. Because such experiences of collective trauma involve encounters that are just *too much*. What is felt and otherwise sensed cannot be translated into experience and cannot easily find expression in the world that we live in, and thus they remain lodged in the body. The bodies that allow themselves to experience such overload of sensuality and emotions are the vessels between death and life, between the dead and the living; they are the mediums, hysterical skeletons, dancing, laughing and singing, being emphatic and "inappropriate". They are the *artists* who can form an in-betweenness, a bridge of remembrance; a material separation and connectivity that helps us find meaning in times of inexpressible emotions.

References:

Cox, R. S. (2003). *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*. University of Virginia Press.

Dr. Eda Sancakdar Onikinci is a researcher whose interests include de-colonised histories of still and moving image and particularly the 19th century visual culture. Before moving to the U.K., she was a lecturer at Istanbul Bilgi University, in the Department of Film and Visual Communication and Design for seven years. Her teaching included theoretical and practical courses on still and moving image, its history in various cultures and the forms of the relationship developed between the spectator and the screen. With an academic background in visual culture, she also specialises in performance photography. Currently based in London, she has worked with independent performance artists, movers, and choreographers as well as collaborating with art collectives, dance and theatre companies.

List of Works

pages 18–32

PAGE 18—19: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER XIV

2020, 160 x 80 x 15 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, cardboard, glue, plexiglass, screws, photocopies, plastic bucket, plastic stool, wire, clamp, book

PAGE 20—21: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER III

2019, 160 x 100 x 5 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, photocopies, acrylic paint, duct tape, book, clamp, marker pen

PAGE 22—23: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER XI

2020, 160 x 80 x 10 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, screws, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, photocopies, book, clamp

PAGE 24—25: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER II

2019, 160 x 90 x 20 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, photocopies, paint roller, silicone

PAGE 26—27: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER VII

2020, 190 x 110 x 25 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, corriboard, photocopies, book, clamp, wire, oil pastel

PAGE 28—29: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER V

2020, 150 x 80 x 15 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, photocopies, book, clamp, wire, duct tape

PAGE 30—31: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER I

2019, 190 x 80 x 20 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, paper doilies, book, clamp, paper, gouache paint, print media, duct tape

PAGE 32—33: VOICE OVER TROUBLED WATER VI

2019, 150 x 80 x 15 cm

wooden frame, nails, acrylic wool, glue, cardboard, plexiglass, screws, photocopies, paint roller







[illegible]



49 EIRETAT. - Types de Pêcheurs. - LL.

Août 1911





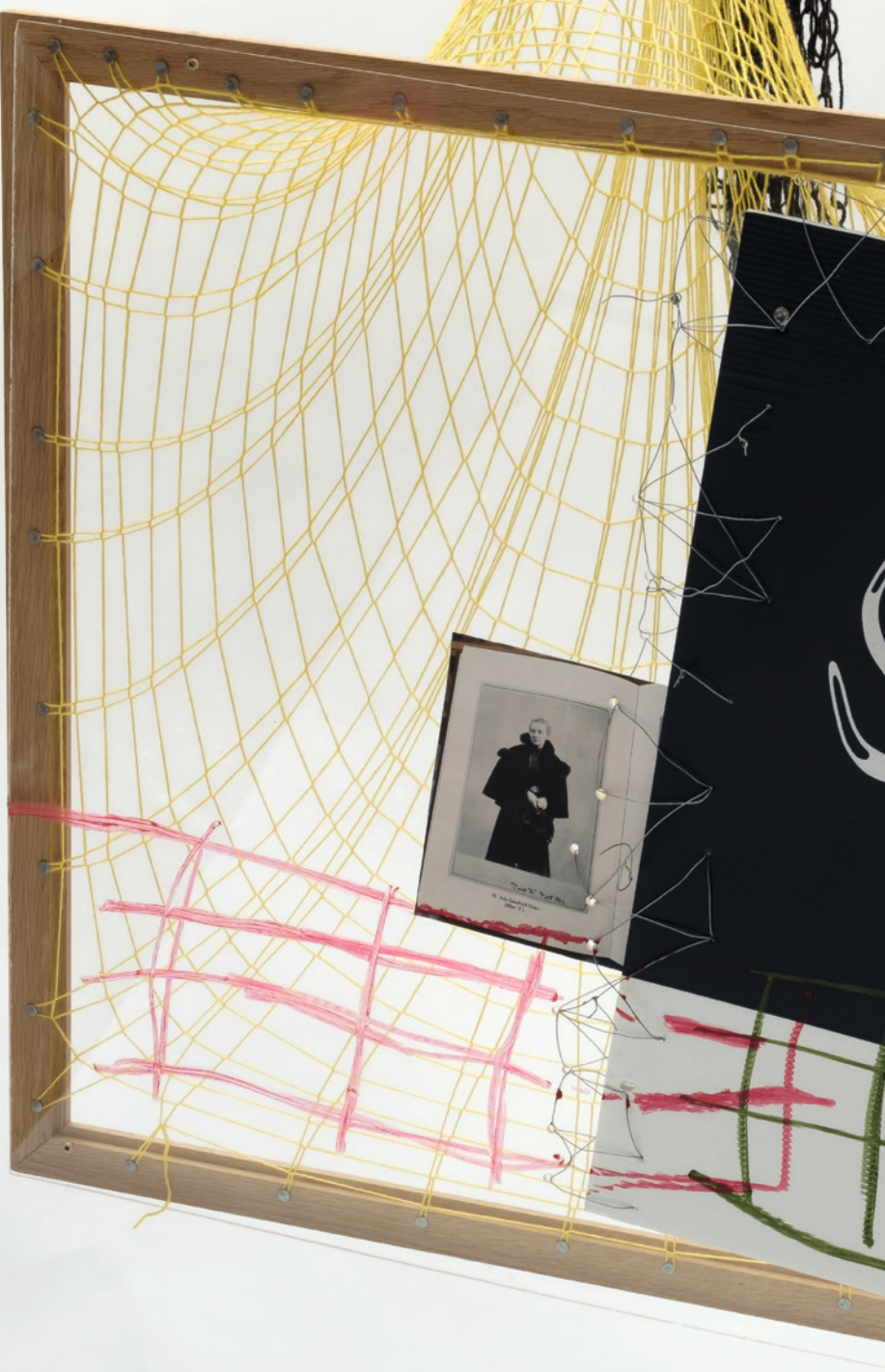
Two manifestations within 7 minutes.
The face shown in Plate 4 was cured seven minutes after the manifestation shown in Plate G -- the greatest that shown Mary M phenomena. A small red mass may be seen in the left eye).

The above mass extrusion, protrusion - forms of or (see full r "Attention on

t. 4. 1937.
"Lily" likeness in 1937

Receding teleplasm: the ruffled surface is produced by the ebbing of the more fluid central portion as it returns to the medium's mouth leaving the more stable outer portions in a wrinkled condition. The dazzling whiteness of this mass is noteworthy.





/ Imprint/ Impressum

Photo credits:

Page 10/95: The Dance of Death. Oil painting, Wellcome Collection. Public Domain Mark. Public Domain Mark (PDM) terms and conditions: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0>

Page 12/96: Dance of death (The Noble Lady), 16th century, Hans Holbein the Younger, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15441937>

Page 13/96: The Death and the Lady, Journal of the English Song Society, 1906

Page 14/97: Séance, unknown

...

The poem „The Lullaby for Grieving“ was first published in the poetry collection „High noon and the body“ by Kyla Pasha with YODA PRESS, India in 2010.

The poem „The Last Endeavour“ was first published in 2021 in the poetry collection „Drop Bear“ by Evelyn Araluen with University of Queensland Press, Australia.

The short story „No Sleep Every Night“ was first published in 2014 in the volume „13 Moons“ by Ee Leen Lee with Buku Fixi, Malaysia.

Zusammenstellung und Recherche:

Charlotte Malcolm-Smith & Katharina Ewald
Übersetzungen: Florian Keller & Katharina Ewald
Gestaltung: Bruno Dorn, Frankfurt am Main
Fotografie: Axel Schneider, Frankfurt am Main
Druck und Herstellung: Druckerei Zarbock, Frankfurt am Main

Papier: Munken Lynx, Condat Perigord

Schriften: TT Travels, Macklin Sans, Baskerville

© Charlotte Malcolm-Smith, Autoren, Fotografen & bruno dorn verlag, 2022

Zu beziehen über:
bruno dorn verlag
Salzschlirfer str. 18
60386 Frankfurt am Main
T 069. 36 70 75 13
bdv@debook.de
www.debook.de

ISBN 978-3-942311-35-9

Diese Publikation ist gefördert mit Mitteln von

**hessische
kultur
stiftung**

